

EUROPEAN EXPERT MEETING ON FAMILIES AND MENTAL HEALTH

# Work-Life Balance Strategies in Family Policy

Wednesday 25th September 2024

9.15-17.30 CET

Vilnius, Lithuania





*European expert meeting on families and mental health  
co-organised by  
COFACE Families Europe and the National Assembly of Active Mothers (NAMS) Lithuania*

## **Work-Life Balance Strategies in Family Policy**

25<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Lithuanian Parliament

Acknowledging the importance of work-life balance is crucial for maintaining personal well-being and mental health which encompasses various aspects, such as emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Therefore, a healthy work-life balance positively affects our personal relationships and helps coping with stress. This balance extends to family responsibilities, including care for both children and elderly family members.

Family care includes taking care of both children and older family members. According to 2019 [Eurostat](#) data, almost 90 million people in the EU have care responsibilities for children, and more than 12 million people in the EU take care of ill, elderly and/or disabled relatives. Work-life balance rights are being consolidated in public policy across Europe (in great part following the transposition of the EU work-life balance directive), and also increasingly in company policies which are building family-supportive workplaces.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) puts a strong focus on work-life balance of parents and carers, with different initiatives to support families: legal frameworks like the EU work-life balance directive and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive; and policy frameworks like the European Care Strategy and the European Child Guarantee.

This European Expert Meeting seeks to explore the intersection of these two domains (mental health and work-life balance), bringing together stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and civil society to examine challenges, share best practices, and foster innovative solutions to support families in maintaining optimal mental health while navigating work-life demands.

In order to better understand the impact of work-life balance on family well-being we will look at the complex interplay between work-related stressors, family dynamics, and mental health outcomes for individuals and families. We will explore strategies for fostering resilience within families, including communication skills, coping mechanisms, and mutual support networks, as well as strong rights-based public policies to support families and employer-driven initiatives that promote and healthier balance between work and life.

This expert meeting will:

1. Explore the intersectional dimensions of work-life balance, considering how factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity intersect with family dynamics and mental health outcomes.
2. Promote the integration of family-friendly working conditions, mental health services and family-friendly policies into organisational structures that best meet families' needs.
3. Facilitate dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including employers, employees, policymakers, researchers, and community organisations, to develop comprehensive strategies for supporting family mental health in the workplace.

Working languages: English and Lithuanian

## PROGRAMME

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8.30-9.15      **Registrations/coffee**

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9.15-9.30      **Welcome**  
Minister Vytautas Šilinskas  
Rasa Zemaite, Director of NAMS  
Annemie Driessens, President of COFACE

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9.30-11.00    **Study session 1: The evolution of family policies in Europe**

*This session will set the context looking at the place of work-life balance and mental health in family policies from the perspective of research, policy and practice. We will explore how this is evolving and shaping family policies.*

Speakers:

- Willem Adema, Senior Economist, Social Policy Division, OECD
- Silvija Stanić, Director, Parents Association Step by Step, Croatia
- Teresa Roščinska, adviser of Horizontal Policy and Project Management Group, Ministry of Social Security and Labour, Lithuania

Chair: Attila Böhm, Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, COFACE

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11.00-11.30    Stretching break

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11.30-13.00    **Study session 2: 1000 days of parenthood and the mental load**

*This session will examine the distribution of informal childcare activities for children between partners within the household, and how care is shared within families. We will also discuss policy pointers to address these pressures, and the development of psychological and social support to assist families with different mental health challenges such as post-natal depression.*

Speakers:

- Vytautas Peciukonis, Research Officer at European Institute for Gender Equality
- Martino Serapioni, Research Programme Coordinator, European Observatory on Family Policy
- Vilma Ražauskienė, Researcher at Institute Of Sociology At The Lithuanian Centre For Social Sciences

Chair: Rasa Zemaite, Director of NAMS, Lithuania

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13.00-14.00    Lunch break

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14.00-15.30 **Study session 3: Caring for the caregivers**

*Caring for someone else can be very rewarding but can also lead to challenges, especially in the absence of any professional support. Due to the lack of adequate support, too many family carers in Europe suffer from an unbearable responsibility and a permanent state of anxiety, linked to a variety of factors. Some carers are also considered the “sandwich generation” caring for both young and older family members.*

Speakers

- Sylvia Van Walleghem, Researcher at KU Leuven in Magentaproject, Belgium
- Sarah Loriato, Policy Officer on Employment and European Parliament Liaison, AGE Platform Europe
- Sandra Norvilienė, Human Resources Manager, Employment Partner Retiva, Lithuania.

Chair: Elizabeth Gosme, Director, COFACE

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15.30-16.00 Stretching break

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16.00-17.30 **Study session 4: Building family-supportive workplaces**

*This session will take a look at workplace dynamics and their impact on the work-life balance of families such as the pros and cons of telework, company policies to support family-related leaves, and the impact of workplace discriminations.*

Speakers:

- Tina Weber, Research Manager, Eurofound
- Marta Pompili, Policy Officer responsible for Gender Equality, EQUINET
- Inga Ruginienė, President, The Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation

Chair: Kinga Joó, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee

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17.30 **Conclusions and next steps**

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